

Lisa Cataldi

From: Ryan Barker <ryandbarker@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 13, 2024 1:09 PM
To: House Education Committee
Subject: Support H 7726

March 13, 2024

Dear Chairperson McNamara and the House Committee on Education,

As a resident of Providence, a parent of children who will soon enter the public school system, and as a teacher at 360 High School, I am writing **to encourage you to support H 7726, which will establish a process public school districts must follow before closing a school.** I am deeply concerned about the closures of Fortes Elementary, ASF Broad Street Elementary, Carl G. Lauro Elementary, Gilbert Stuart Middle School, and 360 High School. These closures occurred with absolutely no community input. Repeatedly, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has shown disdain for students, families, and educators. This legislation is necessary to finally hold RIDE accountable.

This legislation is crucial to ensuring that school districts are accountable to the families and students they serve. **It requires the need for transparent, common-sense information that people in the community deserve to know before a decision like this is made.** The Providence Public School Department (PPSD) and RIDE made the decision to close the schools mentioned above without consulting the school communities that will be disrupted by these closures. This lack of community engagement is inexcusable; it is also part of a pattern of poor leadership that excludes community input. We need a mechanism that ensures all students and families are fully engaged in any process that involves such a drastic change in their lives.

We — teachers, students, alumni, and families — **have been fighting to keep 360 High School open** for over a month. I write to you today in order to continue that fight.

The General Assembly has plenary power over education in this state. I ask that you use this power to help prevent not only the inexcusable closure of 360 High School, but also future closures like this from happening. Families who have experienced the pain of secret, sudden school closures deserve meaningful action now.

I hope that you will join me in standing in solidarity with the members of the Providence Schools community, who have seen their schools taken from them without their input. **I want to emphasize that this legislation is not asking for excessive or radical amounts of information; it simply requires the very basics of community engagement and community input.** Community engagement and input are nowhere near where they need to be in Providence.

Thank you for taking the time to review my concerns. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

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